



DIVISION OF WATER RESOURCES
HUGH RICCI, ADMINISTRATOR / STATE ENGINEER

PURPOSE:

The Division of Water Resources works to protect the health and safety of Nevada's citizens and visitors through the appropriation and adjudication of public water. Other responsibilities include the adjudication of claims of vested water rights; distribution of water in accordance with court decrees; review of water availability for new subdivisions; review of the construction and operation of dams; appropriation of geothermal resources; licensing of well drillers and water right surveyors; review of flood control projects; maintenance of water resource data and records; providing technical assistance to government boards, offices, and agencies; and water planning activities such as flood planning, emergency preparation and response.



ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE:

The State Engineer is responsible for statewide administration of the division. The division consists of seven sections: Engineering, Water Rights, Titles, Hearings, Surface Water and Adjudications, Water Planning and Floodplain Management, and Information Technology. Additionally there are division branch offices in Las Vegas, Winnemucca, and Elko.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY:	Title 48
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:	62.5 FTE / 2004
TELEPHONE:	775.687.4380
WEB SITE ADDRESS:	www.water.nv.gov



GOAL OR OBJECTIVE:

Conserve, protect, manage, and enhance the state's water resources for Nevada's citizens and visitors through the appropriation and reallocation of the public waters.

Field investigation of non-permitted diversion.
Cottonwood Creek, Honey Lake Valley.

Photo by Steve Walmsley
Summer 2004

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- ❑ Successful in meeting growing demands by conversion of water rights from existing uses to new uses.
- ❑ Issued 1,751 permits and took action on 2,489 applications.
- ❑ Completed 5,295 title transfers of water rights, which required the review of 24,474 individual deeds.
- ❑ Continued to be active in administering the AB380 program, thereby reducing litigation concerning use of the Truckee River. Allocated significant staff time to negotiating TROA. In addition, allocated significant staff time to Walker River and Walker Lake issues.
- ❑ Held hearings regarding the water right applications for the Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Repository and subsequently denied the applications on the grounds that the use of the water would threaten to prove detrimental to the public interest.
- ❑ Held hearings for the first time on applications filed by Las Vegas Valley Water District and the Southern Nevada Water Authority to appropriate water outside of Clark County.
- ❑ Held 97 hearings and issued 365 rulings dealing with 543 applications, permits, and well drilling issues.
- ❑ Continued adjudication work (quantifying pre-statutory water right claims) on the East and South Fork of the Owyhee Rivers, Little Owyhee River, Bruneau, and Jarbidge Rivers, and Ruby and Clovers Valley. This work included the compilation of an abstract of claims, investigations of stream flows and diversions, preparation of maps and surveys, and the issuance of the Preliminary Order of Determination.



East Fork Owyhee River.

- ❏ Continued to map the Orr Ditch Decree on the Truckee River. Produced 24 maps that were approved by the State Engineer and Federal Water Master. Currently 126 maps have been completed, leaving three maps to complete the initial part of this mapping project.
- ❏ The Preliminary Order of Determination for the Carson Valley Adjudication is being finalized and is nearly ready for distribution to claimants.
- ❏ Continued to update and add to the water right database.
- ❏ Continued to update and add to the web site, which allows the general public to access forms and databases including well logs, titles, water right surveyors, well drillers, and dams.

GOAL OR OBJECTIVE:

Ensure that dams in the state are built safe and remain safe for the design life of the dam.



Greystone Mine in Lander County.
Tailings dam undergoing engineering review of the design and construction for safe practices.

Photo by Michael J. Anderson
September 2004

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- ❏ Protected the safety of Nevada's citizens and visitors by inspecting all high hazard dams, and inspecting significant and low hazard dams pursuant to their scheduled frequency.
- ❏ Promulgated regulations to support and better explain the intent of the existing statutes and office policies.

GOAL OR OBJECTIVE:

Enforce the well drilling regulations.

ACCOMPLISHMENT:

Continued to license well drillers and enforce the well drilling regulations through well site investigations during drilling.

Well inspection, Clover Valley.

Photo by Ryan Clark
March 2004



KEY LONG-TERM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- ❏ Continue to manage the state's water resources through monitoring existing uses, reallocating water to new uses, and ensuring that Nevada's growth can be based on a sustainable yield. This includes monitoring and studying the effects of pumping the carbonate aquifer on existing rights.
- ❏ Reduce the backlog of appropriation applications and change applications while expeditiously acting on applications as they are received.
- ❏ Continue to protect the health and safety of Nevada's citizens and visitors through the implementation of well drilling laws, rules, and regulations to ensure that the water resources of the state will be available for future generations.

***SUBSIDENCE IN LAS VEGAS VALLEY
DUE TO GROUNDWATER PUMPING***



THEN: 1971



Now: 2003

- ❑ Through the adjudication process set out in NRS 533, the division will continue to attempt to quantify and determine water rights put to beneficial use prior to enactment of various statutes (vested rights), thereby ensuring that those water rights are recognized.



Above: Stream flow measurement,
weir set in Long Valley Creek.

Left: Petroglyphs found in the same area.

Photos by Steve Walmsley
March 2004

- ❑ Continue to maintain, update, and improve the water rights database with the eventual goal being Internet access to the general public.
- ❑ Continue to protect the safety and health of Nevada's citizens and visitors through the applicable statutes and regulations for dam safety, via dam plan reviews and dam inspections.
- ❑ Reduce the backlog of requests for changes of ownership of existing water rights filed before October 1995 and continue to process newly filed reports of conveyances in a timely manner.
- ❑ Work to carry out the higher priority recommendations outlined in the State Water Plan and review the balance of the recommendations to see how they can best be implemented/accomplished in a timely manner.

- ❏ Continue to provide flood plain management assistance to the communities throughout Nevada and the state itself.
- ❏ Continue to enforce statutes related to channel clearance and flood control.



Spanish Springs flood damage, undercut roadway, and utility damage at West Calle de la Plata.

Photo by Kim Groenewold
June 2002



Spanish Springs flood damage at Alena and Beau Drive.

Photo by Charlie Soracco
June 2002

SIGNIFICANT LEGISLATIVE OR EXECUTIVE ACTIONS AFFECTING THE AGENCY:

- ❏ AB403 of the 2003 Legislative Session added a criterion that the State Engineer may consider when approving an extension of time request. That criterion gave the State Engineer the ability to approve an extension if water could not be put to beneficial use based on a prolonged period of less than average precipitation.
- ❏ SB76 of the 2003 Legislative Session made an amendment to SB96 of the 1995 Legislative Session (referred to as the “Stockwater Bill”), which declared that in order to appropriate water for stock, the applicant must own, lease, or have interest in the livestock to be placed on the land.

Staff clearing Parshall flume at Price Lake headgate.

Photo by Dan Taylor
June 2002

